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# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BULLETIN

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## Notes.

Upon the recommendation of the Building Committee, the Trustees of the Museum have sent a commission consisting of the Director and Messrs. R. Clipston Sturgis and Edmund M. Wheelwright, architects, to Europe, to make a study of certain museums in connection with the preparation of plans for the new Museum. The expenses of these gentlemen have been provided for by a gift of money for the purpose from friends of the Museum. The party sailed from Boston on January 2 for Genoa, and will be absent about three months. The problems to be studied are mainly connected with light, arrangement and administration, it being the wish of those who are occupied with the plans for the new Museum to obtain exact and full information not only about the more satisfactory of the older galleries but the more promising of the new. The President, Mr. Samuel D. Warren, who is also chairman of the Building Committee, accompanies the party.

Mr. John Briggs Potter, Keeper of Paintings, returned from Europe on January 11, after four months spent in the study of modern methods of installing and caring for pictures.

A Manual of Italian Renaissance Sculpture, as illustrated by the casts in the Renaissance Room, has been prepared by Benjamin Ives Gilman, Secretary of the Museum, and is now in press. While the number of Italian Renaissance casts exhibited at the Museum is small, the collection contains several of the masterpieces of the period and some representation of all the most noted sculptors. Other casts, including those of the Gattamelata and Colleoni equestrian statues recently given by Francis Bartlett, cannot at present be exhibited for lack of space. Of the works referred to in the Manual which are only fragmentarily or not at all represented among the casts, most may be studied through photographs in the Museum collection. The Photograph Room, to which all visitors to the Museum are welcome, is No. 20 in the basement of the building.

The total number of visitors to the Museum during the past year was 295,416, including 198,806 on Saturdays and Sundays when the Museum is open free, and 31,523 paid admissions. The average number of Sunday visitors was 2,407. The figures in the preceding year were: Total 257,065; Saturdays and Sundays 174,756; and 21,928 paid admissions; average on Sundays, 2,111.

The number of tickets issued in the year admitting teachers in public schools free to the Museum was 1,244, entitling them to bring 5,967 pupils. On application from instructors and students in colleges and elsewhere, 1,552 tickets have been issued.

The current expenses of the Museum for the year were \$77,766.68. Subscriptions from friends of the Museum toward these expenses continue to form a large share of the income applicable to them. The amount contributed during the past year was \$12,937, a sum slightly in excess of that received for the same purpose in 1903.

On the evening of December 18 the Annual Subscribers to the Museum were invited to the opening of the exhibition of the laces of the Museum arranged in the Textile Gallery.

## Experimental Gallery on Huntington Avenue.

A small committee representing the Museum staff and the architects who are employed for the consideration of the building problem was appointed early last month to superintend the work of investigating the question of lighting the new Museum. The observations have been made by Mr. W. R. McCornack, a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Professor Charles L. Norton of the Institute has continued to give his invaluable services to the direction of the experiments, with the assent of the Insurance Engineering Experiment Station, while the Institute has lent the necessary instruments and the use of its equipment for the furtherance of the work. The Boston Plate and Window Glass Company also has given advice and assistance.

The intention is to test both overhead and side lighting and their adaptability for pictures, sculpture, and other objects of art, and to determine the most favorable conditions. At present the problem of lighting picture galleries from above is being considered, and the experiments have been confined to the conditions affecting a room lying east and west.

The aim to obtain in the gallery an illumination of average intensity and evenness of distribution is rendered difficult not only by the varying susceptibility of human eyes but also by the number of uncertain quantities to be considered. To mention some: the surface and tone of paintings, the effect of the background employed, the height of the gallery, the area of the ceiling opening, the altitude of the sun according to the season, the change in the strength and direction of the sun's light in the course of the day, the difference in quality between light from the south and from the north, and the constant variation due to changes of the weather. Many dispositions have been considered and results already reached are warrant for the undertaking and the earnest of its further success.

## Arthur Price.

Arthur Price, Custodian in the Picture Galleries, died on December 28, in his seventieth year, after an absence from the Museum of several months on account of illness. To many visitors to the Museum Mr. Price was the best known of its *personnel*. Every questioner found in him the ready source of abundant information about the pictures he guarded; the often-told story seemed always fresh to him, and for his zeal in telling it a very large number of people in Boston remember him with sincere gratitude. Of not a few his goodness of heart, his cheery simplicity and homely wit had made him the warm personal friend. He respected his position, and therefore was himself respected. He meant to do his day's work well, and still retained in his quiet sphere all the vivacity and interest in life that had marked his earlier years. He was born at Cersey, near Windsor, England, September 19, 1834. At eighteen he joined the army and later saw much service in India. Coming to America, he became the personal attendant of William H. Seward, formerly Secretary of State of the United States, and

accompanied him on his tour around the world in 1870. In 1881 he was engaged at the Museum as Custodian on the days of free opening, and June 2, 1882, entered its regular service as Custodian of Pictures. For twenty-one years and until his end he held this position, in which he gave a striking example of what an untrained mind, by observation, enthusiasm and fidelity, may do for itself. In his death one more personality associated with the Museum since its earliest years surrenders its task to younger hands.

## Textile Room.

### Exhibition of Laces.

The exhibition of lace in the Textile Gallery is made up of three hundred pieces from the collection belonging to the Museum. They have been arranged systematically by Mr. Samuel B. Dean.

Beginning at the left as one enters, the development of needle-point lace may be traced through Venetian examples. Needle-point lace, as the name suggests, is so-called from being made with a needle and thread in distinction from that made on a pillow by plaiting and weaving threads that have first been wound on bobbins, and therefore called pillow or bobbin lace. In Cases 1 and 2 are shown specimens of drawn-work (*punto tirato*) of the fifteenth century. The pieces themselves explain the process of their production. Around the pattern at regular intervals threads are withdrawn from the linen foundation, and those remaining are worked over with linen or silk thread, making a background of lace effect. In the next type (*burato*, sixteenth century) in Cases 3 and 4, the linen has been cut away in places and lace-stitches worked in the empty spaces. The embroidery around the lace-work is a noticeable feature.

Cases 5, 6 and 7 contain specimens of darned net (*punto a maglia*) of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In some, the net foundation is formed of twisted rather than knotted threads. This is the case in five of the seven pieces in Case 5. It will be noticed that many of these early specimens are Sicilian in the character of their design.

Next in order are examples of *reticella*, in Cases 8 and 9. In these the linen is cut away almost entirely, leaving only a few skeleton threads to be worked upon, and the pattern is necessarily geometric. It is but a step from *reticella* to *punto in aria* (Case 10), in which no foundation cloth whatsoever is used, the design being worked with button-hole stitch over foundation threads which are sewn on parchment. At this period we notice on the edge the point or "vandyke," said to be so-called from the zigzag ribs in the stockings made by a weaver of that name. The pattern becomes less and less monotonously geometric, more and more flowing and graceful until we find in the flat-point or *spinnata* merely an indefinite scroll-work suggesting coral (*coralina*). The indefinite scroll-work gradually expands into floriations, becoming more and more elaborate until we have *tagliato a fogliami* (Case 11), without doubt the most sumptuous of all laces, suggesting old ivory carving in the warmth of its tone and its modeled relief. It is timely perhaps to reiterate that needle-point laces are all made by a series of button-hole stitches, as is shown by the piece in construction in the lower part of the case.

Side by side with these, in the same case, may be seen some rare specimens of rose point (*rosalina*)—a development of *tagliato a fogliami*. Below are the fine and beautiful grounded laces (*punto a rete*) of the same period. The series is completed by a panel of Burano laces of the eighteenth century (Case 13, near the Ceramic room). In these the cloudiness or unevenness of the *réseau* or ground is a distinguishing feature. Case 16 in the centre of the gallery, contains on the south side some larger pieces of the kinds before mentioned, and at the east end is a sample of tape-lace (*punto passamano*).

The development of pillow or bobbin laces may be traced from a specimen of *punto a groppo* (over Cases 1 and 2) through the Venetian *merletti a fuselli* (Case 18), the rich guipures of Milan (Case 19), Genoa, and Flanders, to the delicate cobwebs of Binche (Case 25 on the northern wall of the room). With the Genoese bobbin laces, on the north side of Case 20 is a strip of Genoese needle point, with curious pattern of men and things—Adam and Eve, a coat of arms, etc. In this piece the distinctive "millet-seed" bride or tie is noticeable, as it is in the bobbin varieties. Among the Flemish laces (Case 16, north side) the two large square chalice-veils should claim some attention for firmness of weaving and fineness of linen.

Other varieties shown are the gold and silver laces, *punta ragusa* (Case 12) of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, about which sumptuary laws were passed; Valenciennes (bobbin, in Case 17); Mechlin (Case 14); Brussels, both bobbin (Case 15) and needle point (Case 22, with the French laces) and Greek lace or *punto a greco* (Case 19, north side).

There is a good showing of French needle-point laces (point d'Alençon and point d'Argentan) in Cases 21 and 22. Case 24 contains examples of Spanish workmanship, and special mention may be made of the needle-point specimen, at the left end of the case, as a sample of fine needle point—so fine as to lose all interest in the way of design, serving rather as an illustration of misplaced industry and patience. There are also some Spanish mantillas of black lace and some early pattern books (Case 23).

## Chinese and Japanese Pewters in the Metal Room.

The pewter from China and Japan in the Metal Room (Cases 9 and 10) ranges in date from the fifteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century, exhibits a corresponding range of forms and methods, and contributes as a whole, quite new matter regarding the art of both countries. With the still meagre written accounts at hand it would seem that the making of pewter, like that of true porcelain, extends back to the Sung dynasty in China (950–1279), and in Japan to the enterprising period previous to the rise of the Tokugawa Shoguns the latter part of the sixteenth century. Its manufacture, though derived from China by Japan, was energetically fostered by these rulers, and continues as in China to our own day.

In the present collection the object at once most archaic and impressive is the great covered jar in Case 9. This is attributed to the Ming period (1368–1643). It betrays important connections with the porcelain forms then specially affected, of which two or three specimens belonging to the Ming polychrome family may be seen in the Rogers cases of the porcelain exhibition,—jars slender near the base, rapidly expanding toward the shoulder, and sharply narrowing again toward the orifice; but in porcelains, round, instead, as in this example, octagonal. The eight-sided metal jar in question has, however, been fashioned under the limits of metal working, on what might be called a porcelain type, and exhibits in consequence a duplicate and perhaps inverse instance of the interplay which is so apparent between the ancient bronzes and the porcelains of China. Archaeological considerations aside, the sober dignity of form, the rich and pallid brass inlay designs of Taoist worthies and of flowers, the massive proportions and grave color of the whole, will suggest to most people unanticipated reaches of the Chinese decorative genius.

The library incense set of three pieces in the same case engagingly illustrates in Chinese the currents of satire and waywardness which affect the shallows of great arts; we recognize an impressive and pregnant humor in the supple monkey supporting a leaf as a tray, and dressed in little brass pantaloons and a collar